



**USS WHITE PLAINS (AFS-4)**

FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

AFS4/02/DLR:ca

5750

Ser

226

21 MAR 1979

From: Commanding Officer, USS WHITE PLAINS (AFS 4)  
To: Director, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard,  
Washington, D. C. 20374

Subj: Command History

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B

Encl: (1) USS WHITE PLAINS Command History, 1978 (3 copies)

1. Enclosure (1) is provided as required by reference (a).

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R. S. Owens", is positioned above the printed name.

R. S. OWENS

Copy to:  
COMNAVSURFPAC  
COMNAVSURFGRU WESTPAC

USS WHITE PLAINS (AFS 4)

COMMAND HISTORY 1978

The beginning of nineteen seventy-eight saw USS WHITE PLAINS (AFS 4) in the midst of a leave and upkeep period at Berth 15, Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan.

WHITE PLAINS, known throughout the Western Pacific as the "Orient Express," is a member of the Overseas Family Residency Program and was in Yokosuka preparing for the ensuing twelve months which would lead to the replenishment of 49 ships of the U. S. Seventh Fleet.

Leaving Yokosuka on 26 January, WHITE PLAINS conducted alongside and vertical replenishments of two fleet Mobile Logistics Support Force units, USS HALEAKALA and USNS MISPELLION. This at-sea period also included support of the anti-submarine warfare exercise ASWEX 1-78 and major replenishment services on 5 and 6 February to the Carrier Task Group led by USS MIDWAY and including USS KNOX, USS JOSEPH STRAUSS and USS FRANCIS HAMMOND. The embarked Helicopter Support Squadron THREE (Det 106) provided complete helicopter services during every VERTREP, frequently drawing praise from the ships which were serviced.

After a three-day inport period in Yokosuka for the loading of stores, the "Orient Express" again went to sea for replenishment services in the northern Sea of Japan and the Philippine Sea. For six consecutive days (13-18 February), WHITE PLAINS provided daily replenishment services to the Carrier Task Group and Amphibious Task Group participating in the readiness exercise READEX 1-78. Large quantities of stores were delivered to USS KITTY HAWK, USS FRANCIS HAMMOND, USS JOSEPH STRAUSS, USS WORDEN, USS ENGLAND, USS CHICAGO, USS KNOX, USS BAINBRIDGE, USS SAMPLE, USS TRIPOLI, USS FORT FISHER and USS MOUNT VERNON.

On 19 February, WHITE PLAINS entered the port of Keelung, Republic of China for a three-day port visit. On 23 February, the ship weighed anchor and began the brief transit to Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, arriving there in the morning hours of 25 February.

This Subic Bay inport period was a major loading period and the Supply Department brought aboard nearly one thousand pallets of stores from the Naval Supply Depot.

Leaving Subic Bay on 3 March, WHITE PLAINS journeyed north and in the ensuing days participated in both ASWEX 2-78 and the joint U. S./ Republic of Korea exercise Team Spirit '78. During the anti-submarine warfare exercise, USS BAINBRIDGE, USS MIDWAY, USS ENGLAND and USNS NAVASOTA received stores alongside "Orient Express."

The "Team Spirit" exercise with the Republic of Korea is conducted annually to evaluate coordinated amphibious operations. The Seventh Fleet forces which conducted these naval operations included a Carrier Task Group, and Amphibious Task Group, embarked Marine units, ASW patrol aircraft, submarines and, of course, Mobile Logistics Support units.

Enclosure (1)

Stressing side-by-side operations with Republic of Korea Navy, Marine, Army and Air Force units, Team Spirit operations included anti-submarine, anti-surface and anti-air warfare exercises and a major amphibious landing at a beach north of Pohang harbor. USS MIDWAY, USNS PASSUMPSIC, USS KNOX, USS TRIPOLI, USS MOUNT VERNON, USS BRISTOL COUNTY, USS FORT FISHER, USS JOUETT, and USS FRANCIS HAMMOND received stores from WHITE PLAINS during Team Spirit '78.

On completion of this exercise, which took place in the cold, choppy waters off the Korean coast, WHITE PLAINS entered the harbor of Pusan, Korea on 20 March for three days of liberty.

Leaving Korea on 23 March, WHITE PLAINS transited the Sea of Japan, the picturesque Shimonoseki Strait and Japan's "Inland Sea" enroute to Yokosuka.

Arriving in port on 26 March, a major loading and upkeep period commenced which was to last nearly a month, ending on 21 April when WHITE PLAINS departed for enroute services in the Northern Japan, Okinawa and South China Sea operating areas.

During this at-sea period, USS WORDEN, USS NAVASOTA, USNS MISPELLION, USS MIDWAY and one of the newest Spruance-class destroyers, USS PAUL FOSTER took advantage of WHITE PLAINS' standing offer: "Orient Express at your service!"

Following a transit of the Philippine Sea and a short five-day loading period in Subic Bay, WHITE PLAINS departed on 2 May to conduct a series of self-observed type training exercises among major replenishment commitments.

An Operational Propulsion Plant Examination (OPPE) was conducted underway on 3 May by the CINCPAC Propulsion Examining Board. This comprehensive examination evaluated the material condition of WHITE PLAINS' propulsion plant, the ability of her watchstanders to control casualties and the overall training of Engineering personnel. The "Orient Express" passed the examination on the first try, attaining satisfactory scores in nearly every area.

WHITE PLAINS arrived in Yokosuka on 9 May. On 12 May, Captain Robert S. Owens relieved Captain Phillip E. Johnson as Commanding Officer. Captain Owens' previous assignment had been as Executive Officer of USS CORAL SEA.

The ship left port on 15 May for services to several Seventh Fleet units enroute to a port call in the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. During this transit, WHITE PLAINS provided combination CONREP/VERTREP services to the Carrier Task Group consisting of USS MIDWAY, USS FRANCIS HAMMOND, USS O'CALLAHAN, USS KIRK, USS BAINBRIDGE, USS KILAUEA and USS PAUL FOSTER.

The "Orient Express" arrived in Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor on 26 May for a five-day stay. Whether exploring Hong Kong on their own or through organized tours, crewmembers saw the bustle of Kowloon, the Wanchai, Victoria Peak, Aberdeen and the New Territories.

After transiting the South China and Philippine Seas once again, WHITE PLAINS entered Yokosuka for an extensive upkeep and availability period which was to involve the Ship Repair Facilities in both Yokosuka and Subic Bay. The Periodic Restricted Availability (PRAV) lasted through the months of June and July, ending in the early days of August in Subic Bay.

The inport period in Subic Bay also included a Command Inspection by WHITE PLAINS' Immediate Superior in Command, Commander Naval Surface Group Western Pacific, Rear Admiral Robert B. McClinton, USN.

The inspection examined both the material condition of the ship and administrative procedures and records. WHITE PLAINS received a "Satisfactory" score.

Departing Subic Bay on 14 August, the "Orient Express" headed into the Philippine Sea for a replenishment of the nuclear-powered units of Task Group 77.6 which included USS TRUXTON, USS LONG BEACH and USS ENTERPRISE. USS ROANOKE was replenished by CONREP on 19 August, two days before WHITE PLAINS returned to Subic Bay for a provision loadout.

One of the Navy's truly unique, traditional and frequently dreaded ceremonies took place at sea on 20 August as WHITE PLAINS crossed the Equator and entered the realm of Neptunis Rex. Those pollywogs who had not previously crossed the line were put to the most stringent and stimulating tests by the noble Shellbacks aboard ship. Luckily, all the pollywogs saw the error of their ways and were quickly initiated into the ranks of Shellbacks.

After her four days in Subic Bay, WHITE PLAINS left on 26 August and headed north in the direction of Yokosuka. Enroute, Task Group 77.4 was replenished and extensive training was conducted. On 28 and 31 August, USS MIDWAY, USS BLUE RIDGE, USS WORDEN, USS HAROLD E. HOLT and USS REASONER received stores from the "Orient Express," using the alongside replenishment method. On 30 August, the Seventh Fleet flagship, USS OKLAHOMA CITY came alongside to receive stores.

The major portion of September was spent in Yokosuka with a combination load/upkeep/leave period. Underway on 23 September, an extremely heavy schedule of replenishments and activities in support of the readiness exercise READEX 1-79 lay ahead.

In the period between 24 and 29 September, USS ENTERPRISE, USS TRUXTON, USS BRONSTEIN, USS ALBERT DAVID, USS LONG BEACH, USS DAVIDSON, USS LOCKWOOD, USS WORDEN, USS KNOX, USS OKINAWA, USS FRESNO and USS WHIPPLE received services from "the Beat in the West."

Not only did WHITE PLAINS provide support to READEX units, she also participated in nearly all of its exercises. The ship performed extremely well in three over-the-horizon events and one tactical maneuvering exercise. It was a rare sight, indeed, to see USS PYRO, USNS MISPELLION and USS WHITE PLAINS doing "tic-tacs" at standard maneuvering distance and full speed!

Upon the completion of the exercise, WHITE PLAINS returned to Yokosuka with a replenishment of USS MIDWAY, USS ALBERT DAVID and USS WHIPPLE enroute. The inport period 5-22 October was critical to the eventual success of the ship's ORE. In addition to being a leave and upkeep period, a maximum of inport training and schooling for the crew was arranged.

Leaving Yokosuka on 23 October, WHITE PLAINS conducted operations in the Philippine Sea and replenished the newly arrived USS CONSTELLATION Task Group including USS HOEL and USS HAROLD E. HOLT. WHITE PLAINS arrived in Subic Bay for a brief loading period, 30 October through 4 November, and then returned to sea, almost immediately replenishing an Amphibious Ready Group consisting of USS OKINAWA, USS VANCOUVER, USS RACINE and USS MONTICELLO.

Time was indeed drawing close for the "Orient Express" to prove herself at ORE and she continued to train with an eye on both long-term training and short-term results. Her final training session before ORE was completed as Sea Detail was called away prior to entering Tokyo Wan inbound to Yokosuka on 8 November.

The ORE observers from CTF 73 boarded WHITE PLAINS on 13 November for the comprehensive, well-planned Battle Problem. The training and planning paid off as the ship received a grade of "Excellent" for the entire ORE. Engineering Casualty Control received a score of 97%, with Damage Control, Gunnery, Communications and Medical following close behind with scores in the 90's. The sense of relief and satisfaction from the crew was readily apparent as the ship continued at sea while the observers were flown back to Yokosuka. On 17 November, USS MIDWAY, USNS NAVASOTA, USS DAVIDSON, USS BENJAMIN STODDERT and USS R. S. EDWARDS received stores by combination CONREP and VERTREP before WHITE PLAINS returned to Yokosuka on 20 November.

Six days were spent in Yokosuka during this late-November inport period. The "Orient Express" celebrated her tenth birthday on 23 November with an open house for dependents and friends of the crew.

Leaving Yokosuka on 26 November, WHITE PLAINS prepared for a major replenishment of CTG 77.7. In the bitterly cold and wet winds of the Sea of Japan, USS CONSTELLATION, USS MORTON, USS HOEL and USS LEAHY received stores through vertical replenishment on 28 November.

On 1 December, word was received that the "Orient Express" had received the "Golden Anchor" award, the prestigious award presented annually to the ship achieving the highest percentage of re-enlistments among its eligible crewmembers.

WHITE PLAINS led other major afloat commands with an impressive 75 percent first-term; 83 percent second-term and 90 percent career re-enlistment record.

In officially presenting the award, Rear Admiral McClinton stated, "Your figures were the highest of any ship in the entire Pacific Fleet. We can all benefit from your truly distinguished record."

In accepting the award from RADM McClinton, Captain Owens added, "This achievement comes from a total ship effort and a healthy command environment. There's no way a small group of individuals could have accounted for this honor. I'm proud of the entire crew; all of you made it possible."

Only months before, White Plains had received one of the first Commander Naval Surface Group Western Pacific Retention Excellence Awards. This semi-annual award recognizes a ship's success in all areas of retention and motivation of personnel towards a Naval career. Along with the award came the honor of displaying the blue Retention "R" on the "Orient Express's" bridgewing alongside other departmental excellence awards.

WHITE PLAINS arrived in Subic Bay on 2 December, loading stores until 6 December. USS MIDWAY, USS DAVIDSON, USS SOMERS and USS STODDERT received stores through alongside replenishment in the early morning hours of 9 December. A near-perfect gunshoot (94 percent) by all four mounts on 11 December was followed by setting the Sea and Anchor detail for Subic, the last time the popular Philippine base would be visited during 1978.

Following a routine port period, WHITE PLAINS left Subic Bay on 16 December and headed north towards Yokosuka and the Christmas holidays. One final replenishment evolution, that of the Amphibious Ready Group, remained and that was accomplished on 19 and 20 December as USS MONTICELLO, USS OKINAWA, USS RACINE, USS VANCOUVER, USS DURHAM, USS FRESNO and USS DUBUQUE received stores through both alongside and vertical replenishment methods.

USS WHITE PLAINS received an enthusiastic welcome from her dependents as she arrived in Yokosuka on 23 December. She remained inport for the balance of the year, having completed twelve months of very rigorous, intense operations at sea.

The professional manner in which WHITE PLAINS fulfilled her mission did not go unnoticed. Early in the following year, COMNAVSURFPAC awarded the "Orient Express" the Supply Department "E", the Gunnery "E" and the Communications "C", all for excellence in their respective fields. The ship also received the prestigious Battle "E", signifying the very finest performance and highest standards in her class.